

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LK136
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Name of Service:	Oakleigh Kids Academy
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Address of Service:	Oakleigh Woods, Dooradoyle, Co. Limerick
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Eircode:	V94 W7P3
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Name of Registered Provider:	Helena O Neill
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date(s) of Inspection:	02/07/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	32	PM	30
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Estuary House, Henry St Limerick
Inspection undertaken by:	E Browne
Title:	Early Years Inspector

Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

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Description of service

This full day care service is located in an urban area of Limerick city providing care and education to children aged from 6 months to 6 years, including a sessional service from 09.00 hrs. to 12.00 hrs. for 38 weeks of the year.

The service is operating from a two-storey purpose-built facility from Monday to Friday between 07.30 hrs. and 18.30 hrs.

There are five playrooms in operation for the preschool children. The children have access to sanitary accommodation areas, two sleep rooms and outdoor play facilities which are available to the children each day.

A school aged service is available in the creche.

Staffing

There are 12 staff members including the registered provider and the manager on the roster and working in the service.

On the day of the inspection there were 7 staff working directly with the children in the service.

The registered provider and the deputy were available to assist the staff in the playrooms and cover breaks.

There is a staff member who works in the kitchen preparing snacks and meals.

All staff working with the preschool children have childcare qualifications that range from QQI Level 5 - QQI Level 8 on the National Qualifications Framework document.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

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This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance, health, welfare and development of child, safety, premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment (1)(a)(b)(c), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (3), (4)

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels (1), (2)

Regulation 19(1)(a)

Regulation 26 - Fire Safety Measures (1)(a)(b), (4)

Regulation 29 - Premises

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

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Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,*
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and*
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.*

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,*
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,*
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and*
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.*

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The registered provider operating the service was present on the day of the inspection. There was a named person available who was able to deputise if required.

(b) During the period of the inspection, the registered provider and the manager were present and the staff roster indicated that these persons were always available on the premises.

(c) There was a clear management structure in the service that identified the lines of authority and accountability and the specific roles and responsibilities of each member of the management team.

(2) The files of 12 staff members working in the service were reviewed.

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- (a) There were 20 written and validated references on file from previous employers.
- (b) There were 4 written and validated references on file from other reputable sources such as colleges and schools where previous employers were not available.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for all staff employed to work at the service. All vetting disclosures were dated within the last 3 years.
- (d) Police vetting was not required for the new staff as no persons had resided outside the Irish jurisdiction for a period of time in excess of 6 months.
- (3) All vetting procedures were carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.
- (4) All adults working directly with children held an appropriate qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or an equivalent such qualification.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

- (1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.*
- (2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.*

Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection there were 32 pre-school children, 15 school aged children and 9 adults on the premises working directly with the preschool children including the school aged children.

The adult child ratio was correct.

(2) The person in charge ensured that the minimum ratios of adults to children were correct.

- There were 4 preschool children (1-2) and 2 staff working between Wobbler Room 1 and 2.
- There were 8 preschool children, aged from 2 to 3 years and 2 staff in the Toddler Room.
- There were 15 preschool children (3-4) and 2 staff in Preschool Room 1.
- There were 5 preschool children (3-5) and 3 school aged children and 1 staff in Preschool Room 2.
- There were 12 school aged children in the school aged room with 1 staff member.

The registered provider and the manager were working and covering breaks across the playrooms as required.

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Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and

Compliance Information

Relationship and Interactions around children:

The service successfully supported children in forming and sustaining positive relationships with staff members through an effective key person system. Each child was assigned a dedicated staff member who maintained an individualised understanding of their unique preferences, dislikes, and personal interests. During interactions, staff consistently positioned themselves at the children's physical level, maintained direct eye contact, and demonstrated active listening. They validated the voice of the child by carefully interpreting both verbal communications and non-verbal cues, including gestures and body language, to understand their evolving needs, feelings, and experiences.

Staff responded to requests for assistance in a prompt, highly sensitive manner, utilising positive language and soft, reassuring vocal tones. When children became upset or fatigued, team members immediately provided appropriate comfort and nurturing care. Positive behavioural strategies were used during interactions, and the children were offered praise and encouragement. The staff demonstrated an awareness of the children's personal interests and capabilities. The staff supported the children in individual and group play based activities throughout the day and were actively involved in the children's play by initiating games and joining in when invited to by the children. The programme of care and education was child focused and the children were notified in advance of transitions in activities. An informal communication approach was observed during interactions with parents/guardians. The staff discuss the children's day and observations with the parent/guardians during drop off and collection times. A strong ethos of teamwork was evident in the service with all staff working very well together to support the children.

Physical Environment:

Indoors, the service operated from spacious and well-resourced preschool rooms. All play materials and equipment were stored on low-level shelves, making them easily accessible to the children. Storage boxes were clearly labelled, which encouraged children to independently select and return materials. Low-level tables and chairs were provided for tabletop activities and lunch, promoting autonomy and comfort.

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Large tuff trays filled with a variety of art and craft materials stimulate creativity, while toys and equipment were rotated between higher and lower shelves according to the current learning themes and the children's emerging interests, preferences, abilities, and developmental stages.

Outside, the younger children had their own enclosed all weather surface area with a shelter which provided good shade for these children while playing outdoors in all weathers.

Beyond this, for the older children there was a large green matted space for games and free play, a mud kitchen, a spacious sand play zone, and a designated planting and gardening spaces. A sheltered area furnished with tables and chairs supported a range of outdoor tabletop activities, such as art, crafts, and construction play, allowing children to enjoy these pursuits when weather conditions were favourable.

On the day children were outside as much as possible for the fresh air, physical activity and exploring.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-*
- (a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and*
 - (b) the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.*
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.*

Compliance Information

- (1)(a) Documentation was available to demonstrate that fire drills were practiced monthly. The last recorded date of practice of fire drill was the May 2026.
- (b) The number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment in the premises was up to date. Fire extinguishers were last maintained in September 2025 and the smoke alarm system was serviced in May 2026.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire was displayed throughout the service.

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Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

- (a) The premises appeared to be of sound and stable structure. No identification of any building defects were observed or highlighted by the registered provider or any staff member.
- (b) The entrance to the service was secured and all visitor access was managed appropriately. The outdoor areas were safe and secured with high walls and fences preventing any unauthorised access to or exit from the areas.
- (c) Heating, ventilation and lighting were adequate in each area of the facility.
The room temperatures in the sleep rooms for the children aged between 1-2yrs of age and the playrooms were within the normal range of 18 – 22 degrees Celsius. Windows were open and there was a portable mechanical ventilation in operation in the main corridor close to the sleep rooms.
- (d) The premises throughout appeared clean with a high standard of operational hygiene noted in all areas of the premises. The registered provider has plans to replace the flooring covering in the upstairs preschool playrooms during the summer break in July/August 2026.
- (e) There were an adequate number of toilets, nappy changing areas and wash hand basins in the service for the number of children and adults in attendance.